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SUBJECT Use of the Designation "Guard" for Soviet
Units and Ranks

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PLACE ACQUIRED **THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION**

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1. Source stated that the term "Guards" appeared late in 1941 or early 1942 when the German armies were advancing on Moscow. STALIN named the defenders of Moscow as "Guards" to boost their morale. At the same time, the Soviet policy changed somewhat; the churches were opened, members of the armed forces began to wear shoulder boards, many promises were made to the people, etc. A unit of the Soviet forces had the title "Guards" bestowed upon it for outstanding performance of duty during combat. It was conferred on divisions, regiments, or separate battalions. Source never heard of any unit larger than a division receiving this title.¹

- a. If a division received the title "Guards", then all subordinate units within the division automatically received the honor.
- b. If only one regiment of a division received the honor, then that regiment alone was so titled.

2. "Guard" regiments earned certain recognition for their World War II exploits in the form of decorations and honors. Regiments possessing the greatest number of such decorations were considered better than other regiments.

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earned the following honors:

- a. Order of the Red Banner
- b. Order of Suvorov
- c. Order of Kutuzov
- d. Order of Bogdan Khmel'nitskiy
- e. Order of Aleksander Nevskiy

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3. From the soldiers' point of view, it was more difficult to serve in a "Guards" unit. Training and discipline were considerably stricter, because of the desire to live up to the past performances of the unit.

4. An officer or EM was eligible to be called a "Guards" member after completion of eight months of service in a "Guards" unit.

a. Officers were addressed by EM in the following manner. (This was not religiously adhered to except on formal occasions.)

"Comrade guard lieutenant"

"Comrade guard captain", etc.

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c. EM are supposed to address each other as Comrade guard private, etc., but in reality this was never done.

d. Each "Guard" soldier was authorized to wear the "Guards' Badge" /Page 145 DA Pam 30-50-17, but Source never saw more than five soldiers in the entire regiment wear their badges. A larger percent of the officers wore their "Guards' Badges", but even then the number was small.

e. Upon transfer to another "guards" unit, the officer or EM retained his standing as a "guards" member without having to undergo the eight months' service requirement.

f. Upon transfer to a non-"guards" unit, the officer or EM lost his title as a "guards" member.

5. There was no selection or requirement for assignment to a "Guards" unit. Consequently, the caliber of personnel in a "Guards" unit was considered the same as in a non-guards unit. Guards personnel did not show any particular esprit de corps.

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1. Comment. [redacted] is also a "Guards" army. Source stated that the title was not given higher than division, but he added that there could be exceptions to this rule.

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